DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 011 CS 206 268

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| TITLE | Evaluation of the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills, July 9-17, 1979. |
| INSTITUTION | Northeastern Univ., Boston, Mass. Urban Schools Collaborative. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Boston Public Schools, Mass. Office of Curriculum and Competency. |
| PUB DATE | Oct 79 |
| NOTE | 63p.; Prepared in collaboration with the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills. Uneven print quality. |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC03 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Evaluation Criteria; Inservice Teacher Education; *Institutes (Training Programs); Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; *Summer Programs; Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Skills |
| IDENTIFIERS | Boston Public Schools MA |

ABSTRACT

This report contains a first evaluation of the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills, which was organized to help parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston (Massachusetts) public schools begin the development of a comprehensive and coordinated writing program for grades kindergarten through twelve in each school district, and to develop guidelines for the assessment of writing skills as part of the state-mandated basic skills improvement policy. The various sections of the report provide information about the following topics: (1) the methodology of the evaluation; (2) institute organization; (3) institute staff, guest speakers, and workshops; (4) reading and writing assignments; (5) the development of recommendations for a comprehensive writing program; (6) institute objectives; (7) suggestions for future teacher training institutes; and (8) the conclusions of the evaluation as drawn from questionnaires completed by the program participants. Attachments to the report include a list of participants, names of staff members, a program overview, a selected bibliography of materials concerning the teaching and assessing of writing skills, and a copy of the recommendations for a writing program prepared by the participants. (FL)

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EVALUATION

of

# THE SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

July 9 - 17, 1979

80-BC 0713

Sponsored by

Boston Public Schools
Office of Curriculum and Competency

and

Coordinators Group
College/University/Cultural Pairings

Submitted to:

Department of Grants Administration
Department of Management Information Services
Office of Curriculum and Competency

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October, 1979

CS206268

## I. Introduction

Parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools have long been concerned about the need to improve their students' writing skills. Indeed, general concern about the teaching of composition and the level of literacy achieved by many public high school graduates has led to recent state regulations that require regular assessment of writing skills, the establishment of minimum standards, and provision for remediation in each community in the commonwealth. Unfortunately, a systematic and comprehensive K-12 writing program has never been fully implemented in most school systems; little has been known until recent years about the teaching, learning, and assessment of written language skills and few teachers have ever been trained to teach and assess composition in the same way that they have been taught to teach and assess reading and mathematical skills.

The Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills was organized primarily to help parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools begin the development of a comprehensive and coordinated writing program for Grades K-12 in each district. It was also designed to develop guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing skills as part of the Basic Skills Improvement Policy. The Institute was planned and directed by the chairperson of the Curriculum Committee, Coordinators Group, College/University/Cultural Pairings in cooperation with the Office of Curriculum and Competency in the Boston School Department. It was facilitated and sponsored by the Coordinators Group in conjunction with the office of Urban Schools Collaborative at Northeastern University and thus represented a new mode of collaboration between the Coordinators Group and the Boston Public Schools.

The Institute was held at Northeastern University from July 9-13, 1979, and at Curry College on July 17, 1979. The participants represented all educational levels and all districts: teachers and principals or assistant principals from each of the three levels from the nine districts; parent representatives from the nine Community District Advisory Councils and from the Boston Home and School Association; district level staff development personnel; and other interested administrators, coordinators, and central staff representatives.* Through lectures, small group discussions, and workshops, participants were provided with an opportunity to gain an understanding of the components of a total developmental writing program, current thinking about the teaching of composition for different student populations, various techniques for skill development, methods of assessment and correction, and classroom and school-wide organizational features. Every characteristic of an effective basic skills program in writing suggested by the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs was touched upon during the Institute.**

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* See Attachment A for a list of all participants at the Summer Institute.
** See Attachment B for a copy of the Institute's program.

To conclude the Institute, participants were asked to formulate recommendations for the development of a K-12 writing program and curriculum guide in the Boston Public Schools in the coming years.*

II. Evaluation Plan

In planning the Institute, the Director foresaw the need for two kinds of evaluation: the first, an evaluation of the week-long activities at the Institute itself in light of its stated objectives; the second, an evaluation of the impact of the Institute over time. The sixth day of the Institute, on July 17, 1979, at Curry College, was planned specifically to develop this second kind of evaluation. A selected group of participants were provided with the opportunity to design their own plan for evaluating the long-term effects of the Institute. The reader will find an outline of this plan in Appendix E of Attachment B. The reader should also note that the final evaluation proposed by the participants will not be possible to complete until January, 1980. This document, therefore, reports only the first evaluation planned, the evaluation of the week at the Institute itself.

III. Methodology for the First Evaluation

The evaluation of the Institute was accomplished by means of a four-page questionnaire.** The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first contained mostly open-ended questions about different facets of the Institute; the second requested mostly quantifiable information for possible future teacher-training institutes, or for in-service courses or workshops. Participants were given the questionnaires on the fourth day of the Institute. They were asked to begin their evaluation of the Institute as "homework" for the night and were requested to hand the forms in at sign-out time on the fifth day.

One purpose for handing out the questionnaires on the fourth day was to enable all participants to write out their reactions to the Institute at leisure and in privacy. Also, it was hoped that time to reflect about the four days at the Institute would produce richer and fuller responses - and would help participants to pull together some of the ideas stimulated by the first four days' activities for generation during the small group discussions planned for the fifth day. Thus, the assignment of the questionnaire and its format was intended to serve an educational as well as an evaluative function since no formal written paper was required of participants as a condition for attendance at the Institute. Altogether 50 questionnaires were returned on the fifth day and each was given a number for reference purposes.

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* See Attachment C for a copy of the recommendations submitted to the Office of Curriculum and Competency in September, 1979.

** See Attachment D for copy of the evaluation questionnaire.

## IV. Results of the First Evaluation

### A. Organization

The daily program outlined in Attachment B indicates how the Institute was organized. On the first day, participants were presented with the goals and philosophy of the Institute and given a theoretical framework within which to understand issues in composition teaching and research. On the second and third days, participants heard lectures on resources and techniques for developing writing programs and for teaching writing and reading to different student populations. They also rotated through four workshops ranging from structured exercises to free writing activities. On the fourth day, personnel from Educational Testing Service discussed methods of evaluating writing and conducted two holistic rating sessions with participants. On the fifth day, participants developed preliminary recommendations for a K-12 writing program and guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing. On the sixth day, 27 elected participants refined the first draft of the recommendations and designed their own plans for the follow-through and the evaluation of the Institute.

Small discussion groups led by experienced professional educators and held daily offered participants the opportunity to clarify issues arising from lectures and workshops, to share ideas, and to approach consensus better when developing recommendations. Participants were always grouped heterogeneously and alternated each day between large and small groups.

The overall evaluation of the organization of the Institute was highly positive. Only two respondents indicated dissatisfaction. Seven participants commented that more time was needed to reach the Institute's goals. A few would have preferred shorter speeches and more short breaks. A large number praised the inclusion of both large and small group activities and the presentation of a wide variety of points of view on all issues.

> From the outcome of this Institute, one can see that there was careful planning for it. The able speakers concentrated on relevant and important topics. At the same time the small group situation allowed for individual participation. (Number 47)

> I found the Institute very well organized. First we were given a lecture and then that was followed by a discussion period or a workshop. I do feel however that the time units between activities were too short. (Number 13)

> Very well organized. Even though it was necessary to have more time to continue discussions, the speakers scheduled for those times were also beneficial. Not enough time on the whole. (Number 23)

This was the most organized Institute I have ever attended. (Number 1)

Use of diversity in both process and speakers fine. Organized, well prepared. (Number 31)

B. Staff

The professional staff at the Institute consisted of five discussion leaders, drawn mostly from Boston's schools and colleges, and three workshop presenters, from several other school systems. The overall response to discussion leaders and workshop presenters was highly positive. Only one participant registered a negative reaction. Respondents consistently praised the workshop sessions:

(Lois Bouchard was) excellent - helped me to realize that there are many ways to motivate good writing. Her style of presentation was low-key but very effective. Her background and credentials were impressive. (Number 1)

Mary Gainor and Mark McQuillan (were) knowledgeable and provided leadership and direction without trying to influence the participants. They were able to summarize and tie together the individual workshops and guest speakers. (Number 6)

I found Vicki Jacobs a fascinating person with a real dedication to teaching writing to students. She has a way of holding attention. (Number 7)

Ronald Gwiazda's questions were well organized, he listened to the viewpoints of the group and reacted...to analyze and summarize quickly and clearly. (Number 9)

Cassandra Merrilles conducted the sessions in a manner that was fair to all speakers yet she let a speaker know if she disagreed...She showed a very positive attitude toward teaching writing and a respect for her students. I was impressed. (Number 32)

Charles Thomas...gets his point across without coming on too strong. He does it in a quiet tone. Good ideas for free writing. He kept his vocabulary level where the parents could understand him. (Number 10)

Anne Obenchain was...the real spark of the workshop...I'm interested in applying her ideas and techniques to the primary level. (Number 1)

C. Guest Speakers and Lectures

The guest speakers included: Seymour Yesner, Director of English and Language Arts, K-12, Brookline Public Schools, and Consultant, English, Reading and Humanities, Minneapolis Public Schools; Sandra Schor, Associate Chairman and Director of Composition, Department of English, Queens College, City University of New York, and Co-Director, Queens English Project; Anne Obenchain, Director of Freshman Composition, Langley High School, Fairfax County, Virginia; and Kathleen Montero, Sandra Gorton, and Laura Rossi, Resource Specialists in Bilingual Education in the Boston Public Schools.

The overall response to the guest speakers was very positive. The following comments drawn from a number of returned questionnaires indicate that each speaker had something to offer at least some of the participants.

Sandra Schor: Very vital session. She set forth a practical theory describing the connection between college and high school programs. (Number 12)

Sandra Gorton, Kathleen Montero and Laura Rossi:

It was good to hear from teachers in the Boston System. Our teachers have much to offer and they know our problems and frustrations beforehand. (Number 25)

I don't know enough about bi-lingual education but found their lecture very informative. (Number 7)

Seymour Yesner: Very good - not my persuasion but of interest. (Number 1)

He spoke on the importance of raising the intellect. This is very important. (Number 28)

The response to Anne Obenchain's lecture and workshop sessions deserves special mention; plans to implement her ideas and materials in the school system are already in progress. Participants were extremely impressed with her presentation. Many wanted more information and indicated they would like to pilot her materials in the schools this year. Several elementary teachers were disappointed that her program had not been fully developed yet for the elementary grades. Participants appreciated the carefully thought out structure of her program, noting that the program grew out of her own teaching experience and stressed the acquisition of specific writing skills in an

integrated reading/writing approach. Her materials were judged realistic, practical, and adaptable, although a few commented that her program should not be viewed as a total writing program.

> I am very interested in her programs and would like more information. I am excited about the practicality and possibility of her program. (Number 15)

> Great - her method has structure yet it allows the child, forces the child, encourages the child to think. I was most impressed because I could see the definite correlation with reading. (Number 22)

> I would have liked more handouts so this program could be reviewed later with an eye toward using some of it in an experimental way in September. (Number 44)

> I was very interested in Anne Obenchain's program. It teaches writing along with structure. As a secondary level teacher I am very interested in structure. I find students have a lot to say but balk at writing because they do not know how to say what they mean and have it come out effectively...I would love to see her program for a 4.0-6.0 level since many of the students I teach are on that reading level. (Number 25)

The evaluation of Sandra Stotsky's lectures were all positive. A number of participants were impressed by the theme that reading and writing are integrally related to one another and that a writing teacher is necessarily a reading teacher as well.

> These (lectures) were very informative and dealt with the theoretical, philosophical and psychological issues not often considered by classroom teachers bogged down by writing assignments to be graded. (Number 16)

> From listening to Sandra Stotsky I feel she has a grasp on what is happening. I think she knows where we are heading. I think the big issue is integration of reading and writing. (Number 22)

D. Workshops on Holistic Scoring

Responses to the two workshops on holistic scoring by personnel from Educational Testing Service were somewhat mixed. Of 38 respondents, 33 were favorably impressed by their experiences in the two rating sessions, one using secondary school students' papers from a New Jersey writing project, the other using writing samples from fourth and fifth graders at the William M. Trotter School in Boston. A majority were convinced that holistic rating is a valid and practical

tool for evaluation. Several teachers indicated that they would attempt to use the technique in reading their own students' papers this coming year and would have liked to have learned more about the use of holistic scoring in teaching.

> Very valuable. Would have liked to examine the use of holistic scoring in the classroom! (Number 34)

> A very valuable presentation. Holistic scoring is a very realistic approach to correcting and encouraging writing. All teachers should be in-serviced in this program. (Number 33)

> They explained the assessing process completely. I'm not sure it is the best but I don't know any other way. (Number 26)

E. Reading and Writing Assignments

On the first day of the Institute, all participants were given a folder containing not only the week's program but also reprints of a large number of articles from professional journals on writing selected personally by the Director of the Institute. No assignments were specified; the articles were simply there for those who wished to read them. All respondents praised the reading "assignments."

> The articles were stimulating and thought-provoking and the bibliography very helpful. (Number 8)

The writing assignments were the writing activities in which participants engaged during the workshop sessions. Most felt the writing activities were important both for improving their own writing and for helping them identify with the learner/writer in the teaching/assessing process. They realized that active involvement with the writing process plays a significant role in learning how to teach children to write. On the other hand, a few respondents felt that the writing activities were "too time-consuming" and "unnecessary."

> I loved the writing assignments we did in class. Doing is learning and those things I wrote down will stick with me. The reading assignments I did at home. (Number 10)

> The reading and writing assignments were very valuable. I was very happy to have the readings included in the folder. I'm interested in improving my own writing skills as well as those of my students. Therefore it was valuable to have opportunities to write as well as to learn ways to motivate students to write. (Number 1)

F. Group Development of Recommendations for a K-12 Writing Program

On the fifth day, participants spent most of the morning in small, heterogeneous groups discussing recommendations for a K-12 writing program and curriculum guide and for guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing. In the afternoon session, participants regrouped according to educational level (primary, middle, or secondary, with parents joining whichever group they wished) and refined their morning's recommendations. This sequence enabled all participants to gain an overview of K-12 concerns before focusing on their own particular educational level.

Because the program overview indicated that participants would develop a scope and sequence in writing, many thought that they were actually going to have to work out detailed objectives in English/language arts grade by grade for 12 levels. Some confusion was understandable. However, most participants did seem to understand that no more than general recommendations for the development of a K-12 program would be expected.

All participants stated that the opportunity for teachers, parents and administrators to work together in formulating recommendations about the teaching and assessment of writing skills was extremely worthwhile. Ten respondents commented at length, expressing their satisfaction and excitement at having been part of this group process. All respondents agreed that the development of a K-12 writing program and curriculum guide was a very important task and that any program and guide that took into consideration the suggestions and concerns of large numbers of teachers, parents and administrators was apt to be more useful than a program and guide that was imposed upon them. Thus, the value of having parents, teachers, and administrators together set goals and standards for the whole school system was underscored by representatives of all three groups.

> The mix of parents, teachers, administrators and support personnel provided an excellent blend of viewpoints and concerns. (Number 8)
>
> Group development of the tentative scope and sequence for the entire school system is the best and most democratic process, provided the members of the group are diversified and represent the system as a whole. (Number 10)
>
> The opportunity for parents, teachers, administrators to sit, discuss, re-hash and come to mutual agreement is beyond words. (Number 7)
>
> It is a highest priority to achieve consensus, drawing from all districts. (Number 2)
>
> The workshop opened up communication between parents, teachers and administrators. (Number 33)

A few participants commented that the task of developing a scope and sequence was "overwhelming," "confusing," and required more "time and knowledge" for completion. Most, however, saw the group's efforts as a "beginning" set of guidelines; a few suggested that a "task force" of qualified individuals should work out more detailed objectives, hopefully drawing on previously developed language arts guides.

> A task force should take old (scope and sequence) - update with new research findings and methods and make it relevant to the Boston students. (Number 12)

> There was not enough time to do the issue justice. We were still unclear and the criteria for minimal standards were difficult to agree on. I feel we have insufficient knowledge to develop a scope and sequence. (Number 9)

Another indication of the value of this experience for the participants was the number of comments expressing satisfaction with working within this group and the desire to continue in the future.

G. Objectives

The objectives of the Institute as stated in the Introduction were to help parents, teachers, and administrators to begin the development of a comprehensive and coordinated writing program for Grades K-12 in each district and to develop guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing skills. All fifty participants who returned questionnaires on the fifth day indicated that the Institute had accomplished its stated objectives. The following comments are typical:

> I do feel that the Institute has accomplished its objectives as stated in the description. As a teacher I have been exposed to many different methods of teaching and assessing writing. I have profited from the several viewpoints. (Number 47)

> I believe the five goals listed in the Program Overview were accomplished. There were many positive side-effects that developed through the week. Many teachers plan to bring back to their fellow teachers and to their administrators the rationale of the Institute. (Number 15)

> I feel the Institute accomplished its goal because it dealt with the initial steps in building a city-wide curriculum. (Number 23)

However, a few emphasized that the Institute represented "only a beginning," and two felt that the objectives had been met only "to a limited degree." Many participants voiced strong concern for the effective development, implementation and coordination of a writing

program in Boston. Their comments expressed a sense of urgency that the momentum towards the development of a writing program be maintained. Many comments also suggested a strong commitment to improve the teaching of writing coupled with skepticism or a sense of impotence bred of past frustrations.

> I think it was beginning. I only hope that those to whom it is a concern take this beginning and begin. As a frustrated Boston school teacher I have experienced too many beginnings with no action... I hope this Institute doesn't stop here. Why can't we begin - today.

> Ideally the Institute has met its objectives of a compilation of ideas and information that will eventually be incorporated into a writing curriculum for the Boston System. However I have my fears or apprehensions of whether this workshop will... end like so many others. To die on some drawing board because of the need to have a direction or...enough money to publish the curriculum. (Number 19)

> In bringing various segments of the school population together for an exchange of ideas it succeeded. The ultimate success will be how the proposals for writing end up. (Number 28)

The need for response to the recommendations and for leadership from central administration was strongly expressed:

> It's like the moral at the end of a fable - it's just the beginning, the very beginning. A lot of time, money and real expertise will be needed - and planning. (Number 46)

> More coordination from Court Street and the District Office is needed. (Number 39)

> I like the ideas, but unless handled properly, (it) will only be a waste of good money. (Number 45)

> It is a matter of qualified leadership to realize the program of scope and sequence. (Number 25)

H. General Comments

Responses to the final open-ended question on the questionnaire, inviting both positive and negative comments about the Institute, helped to set many of the concerns and hopes of the participants within an intelligible framework.

A large number of respondents wondered why more key people such as principals, English department heads, community superintendents, and other administrators from both the district level and central

administration were not present at the Institute. It was understood that late distribution of the Personnel Circular announcing the Institute and the scheduling of the Institute in the vacation month of July did account for some lack of attendance. However, genuine concern was raised that the support of these key people would be essential for effective implementation of the goals and recommendations of the Institute.

> Many Language Arts teachers and department chairpersons were unable to attend. These professionals would have to be involved in planning curriculum of this scope. Not only would their expertise be valuable, but in order for a curriculum to be fully implemented the teachers involved must be committed to its success. This commitment will not be forthcoming if a curriculum is merely imposed. (Number 34)

> Obviously the timing of the Circular was not ideal... there are an insufficient number of people involved who have the authority to implement. (Number 5)

> I was sad to see not very many administrators there. (Number 46)

Several participants also suggested that more professional educators from the Boston Public Schools should have been involved in the planning and the staffing of the Institute to provide more of the local level leadership that would be needed for implementation of a new curriculum. Several participants strongly felt that the special needs and "realities" of Boston's schools could best be addressed by people who work in and have children in these schools.

> More (group discussions) should have been led by Boston people! Such leadership would provide more realism to the Boston teachers attending the workshop. Moreover, Boston leaders would provide a working nucleus to implement the ideas presented and a base for leadership on the local level within the Boston System. (Number 39)

> An Institute which seeks to improve writing skills in Boston needs to be promoted more by Boston teachers and administrators rather than those outside the system. A curriculum cannot be imposed or even suggested by people who have not dealt with the realities of Boston School's educational bureaucracies, teacher deficiencies, apathy and aversion to change. (Number 16)

> Some of the realities of the Boston Schools were not understood. Students, establishment, environment - all very important to writing education. Curriculum will be

> a savior only if these other components are developed. Too many ideas are never implemented because these realities are never dealt with. (Number 31)

> Perhaps Boston school officials and teachers should have been in on the planning. (Number 39)

Clearly, these suggestions have relevance for future in-service work in writing. Indeed, many participants expressed a need for in-service programs in writing for teachers, parents, and administrators. Comments also specified a need for more classroom suggestions and materials, especially on the elementary school level.

> More practical sessions needed (comparing and evaluating publishers materials). I hope this leads to some follow-up in the coming school year. (Number 12)

> Suggest in-service training for teachers - training in creative writing and methods of teaching writing. (Number 33)

> I feel primary and elementary grades could have been covered a little more. (Number 26)

Some participants, both parents and teachers, sensed the need to improve their own writing skills, and many expressed the desire to continue learning and sharing ideas about the teaching and assessment of writing. Many were eager to communicate ideas and materials from the Institute with other teachers, parents, and administrators through in-service workshops, in part to facilitate their implementation.

> I'm interested in improving my personal writing skills as well as those of my students. (Number 1)

> I hope that you will get in touch with us regarding future conferences or workshops...I think it imperative that we not lose contact with each other, or the impetus and possible benefits to the school system will flounder. (Number 43)

A final but critical concern expressed by one teacher was the need to know how teachers would be evaluated in a new writing program. That question may need to be addressed during the initial stages of developing the program.

I. Information for Future Teacher Training Institutes

The second section of the questionnaire sought information that could be useful in planning future teacher-training institutes or in-service workshops. This section was divided into three parts: content of future workshops in writing, desired time and length, and form of credit.

Over 28 different topics were suggested for the workshop sessions, but the most frequently mentioned ones reflect a concern for fundamental issues in teaching and assessing writing. Table 1 lists 12 topics most frequently mentioned by participants.

Table 2 indicates the format preferred by the participants. More than one alternative was checked by most respondents; this seems to suggest a "good balance of involvement and lectures," as one respondent stated.

The largest number of respondents preferred receiving required reading lists about one month in advance, with equal numbers preferring theirs more or less than one month in advance. A large majority also preferred the fall as the best time for teacher-training workshops, but showed no clear preference for particular days or weekends.

For form of credit, an overwhelming number of respondents stated that they would attend for a stipend. Over half would attend for graduate credit, a little less than half for in-service credit. Nine respondents would attend for no credit, and released time was written in on one questionnaire as a necessary co-requisite for this alternative. Undergraduate credit was written in as another alternative that may be especially attractive and relevant to parents. In summary, various forms of credit as well as stipends would attract large numbers of participants to workshops in writing during the school year.

V. Conclusions

It is possible to draw several conclusions from an analysis of the responses on the questionnaires:

1) The organization of the Institute enabled large number of parents, teachers, and administrators to work together effectively in setting general curricular objectives and standards.

2) The judgment was unanimous that the Institute achieved its objectives but changes in curriculum, methods of teaching and assessing writing, and improved student performance will clearly be the more meaningful measures of achievement.

3) The effective implementation and coordination of a city-wide writing program is a major concern of teachers, parents, and administrators alike. A positive and meaningful response by central administration to the recommendations from the Institute will help dispel an ingrained skepticism or pessimism.

Table 1

Most Frequently Suggested Topics for Workshops

| Topics | Number of Responses |
|---|---|
| Practical suggestions for writing in the classroom | 10 |
| Assessment; holistic scoring | 7 |
| Review of different types of writing: informal and formal | 7 |
| Refinement of writing curriculum; development of basic writing curriculum; skill development list | 6 |
| In-depth study of Obenchain's materials and methods of combining reading, grammar study, and writing | 5 |
| Training of Boston personnel; staff development | 4 |
| Overview and review of other writing programs and successful teachers' experiences in Boston | 4 |
| How to motivate writing; overcoming fears | 5 |
| Sentence combining | 3 |
| Topics covered in Summer Institute for broader segment of Boston school personnel | 3 |
| Expansion and in-depth work in areas covered in Summer Institute for summer participants | 3 |
| How to facilitate the transfer of grammar study to writing | 3 |

Table 2

Frequency of Choice of Format for Workshops

| Preferred Format | Number of Responses |
|---|---|
| 1) lectures followed by large group discussions with lecturer | 15 |
| 2) lectures followed by small group discussions with discussion leaders | 35 |
| 3) classroom observations followed by discussions | 22 |
| 4) workshops on a variety of topics covered at the same time | 31 |

4) Continuous involvement of all three groups throughout the process of developing, piloting, and evaluating a new curriculum may be a decisive factor in its acceptance and, hence, effectiveness.

5) Staff and community resource development will be important and interrelated components in developing and implementing a K-12 writing program. Parents with leadership qualities as well as educational leaders and skilled teachers of writing must be identified within the Boston school community.

## POSTSCRIPT

### Personal Evaluation

by

Sandra Stotsky

In addition to the evaluation of the Institute by its participants, I would like to offer my own observations. I will begin by commenting on some possible deficiencies. First, too much, perhaps, was attempted within the framework of one week. More time for writing activities and group discussions would have been beneficial and would have been available if a two-week Institute had been planned. On the other hand, daily attendance for two weeks might not have been possible for such a large, diverse group of people.

Second, it would have been desirable to have more English department heads, principals, and superintendents as regular participants. An earlier announcement of the Institute (if it had been possible) and its scheduling at the close of school in June might have created a larger pool of applicants from which to select teachers and stimulated better attendance by more higher level administrators.

Third, it is possible that some participants failed to come on the fifth day (only 50 questionnaires were returned) because they felt that the development of even a preliminary scope and sequence was too monumental a task to accomplish on one day. It should have been clearer at the outset that the final product expected at the Institute was a set of general recommendations rather than a detailed scope and sequence.

Fourth, the questionnaires were not coded separately for parents, teachers and administrators. As a result we could not analyze possible differences in their responses as a group. The questionnaire for the final evaluation in December will be so coded.

Some of the most valuable features of the Institute were not entirely appreciated in advance, although the structure for them to emerge had been deliberately planned. One such feature was the procedure for allowing participants to devise their own evaluation plan. This feature is easily replicable and can be built into any project with long-term goals. In this case, the participants devised a plan that would allow them to determine whether there would be any long-term results flowing from their recommendations. Moreover, by allowing participants to select a smaller group to design such a plan, the entire group had an opportunity to

decide upon its more responsible and trusted members. Indeed, the 27 participants elected to meet on the sixth day of the Institute to refine the first draft of the recommendations and to devise an evaluation plan had been among the most active and serious participants at the Institute and did show their sense of commitment on the sixth day by planning two follow-through meetings and by volunteering to help edit the final draft of the recommendations. They were clearly attending on the sixth day for more than the $50 stipend. The fact that several other participants, with no expectation of a stipend, voluntarily attended this meeting suggests a wider commitment to improving the schools that should be tapped more fully in the future.

At this point I would like to raise several questions about the issue of stipends. Parents and teachers or administrators on 10-month contracts were paid a stipend of $150 for attending the first five days of the Institute. The reasons for giving stipends to parents, teachers and administrators for fulfilling professional/citizen responsibilities and for continuing educational growth need to be more thoroughly explored. Are there other and better rewards that a community can give to those who perform these necessary duties? How much time and intellectual effort can one legitimately expect professional educators and citizens to volunteer? I have no answers. Perhaps parents should be paid a stipend, similar to the per diem payment for jury duty, so that even the poorest parent can afford to participate. But perhaps other forms of reward should be considered for professional educators.

Another feature that gratified me was the representative composition of the entire group of participants with respect to race/ethnicity, age, and sex. It was completely unintentional. The only information requested on the application form was name, school, and district. Nevertheless, participants appeared to represent all ages and the many racial/ethnic groups in the Boston Community.

The unique feature of this Institute, so far as I know, and its most appealing aspect was its unusual mixture of participants. The interaction of a relatively large number of parents from all walks of life with professional educators became a remarkably rich experience for all. The Institute had been originally planned as a professional training institute. No special provisions had been made to accommodate lay people with widely varying degrees of academic achievement. Despite a level of presentation that was stimulating and even challenging to participants with doctorates, few parents expressed any sense of bewilderment or discomfort. Only one told me personally that the vocabulary used by lecturers and discussants was difficult and that she spent each evening looking up words in her dictionary. In fact, only one questionnaire contained a negative comment about the difficulty of the Institute for a layperson. In retrospect, I think that treating parents no differently from professional educators, especially during the holistic rating sessions given by personnel from Educational Testing Service, was appreciated for its lack of condescension.

Two older parents told me that they now wished to go back to school to learn how to write better themselves. Many others expressed a desire for workshops in writing for parents.

Sharing learning experiences with professional educators was an educational experience in itself for parents. Hearing teachers disagree with each other in evaluating a piece of writing and finding ways to reach consensus together not only rendered the mystique of professional judgment less intimidating but also helped parents understand the components that make it up - a truly stimulating learning experience. The immense seriousness and concentration of the parents as well as the teachers and administrators during the holistic rating session was notable. Altogether I thought that the Institute successfully reached all groups; their evaluations bear this judgment out.

Attachment E is a copy of a report from one parent to the chairperson of her Community District Advisory Council indicating what she gained from the Institute and her feelings about being a participant. My hypothesis at present is that a model of curriculum development and evaluation that regularly involves large numbers of parents, teachers, and administrators in an interactive process as curriculum objectives and standards are developed may be ultimately a more significant factor in improving the academic achievement of urban students than any curriculum, battery of diagnostic tests, and method of remediation.

Attachment A-1

Participants at the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills

Northeastern University, July 9-13, 1979

Curry College, July 17, 1979

Central Staff Representatives

Betty Bryant, Senior Curriculum Advisor, Early Childhood Education

Clara Hicks, Senior Curriculum Advisor, Middle/Elementary Education

Grace Hatch, Senior Curriculum Advisor, Secondary Education

District I

Dorothy Bethel, Teacher/ Reading Coordinator
David L. Barrett School

Irene McCarthy, Reading Coordinator
William H. Taft Middle School

Jo-Ann Hacunda, Teacher
William H. Taft Middle School

Herman Hernandez-Santana, parent
36 East Newton Street, Apt. 8
Boston, MA 02118

Carmen A. Pola, parent
63 Hillside Street
Roxbury, MA 02120

Elizabeth Guptill, Resource Room Teacher
Martin Milmore School

Elizabeth Teixeira, Principal
Martin Milmore School

District II

Doris Van Story, Teacher
Agassiz School

Michael Sallen, Principal
Agassiz School

Leigh French, Teacher
Seaver School

Michael Decker, Teacher
Mary E. Curley Middle School

Catherine Molloy, parent
305 Pond Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

District III

Mary B. Connolly, Teacher
Joseph Lee School

Thomas Pendergast, Assistant Principal
Joseph Lee School

Luisa Serra, parent
128 Woodley Avenue
West Roxbury, MA 02132

Allan MacDonald, Jr., Teacher
Solomon Lewenberg Middle School

Margaret Pickett, Teacher
Solomon Lewenberg Middle School

Irma Cummings, parent
643 Morton Street
Mattapan, MA 02126

## District IV

Claire McArdle, Teacher
Pauline A. Shaw School

Francis J. Manning, Assistant Principal
Pauline A. Shaw School

Martha Gillis, Reading Coordinator
District IV

Elsie Biles, parent
10 Silvia Court
Hyde Park, MA 02136

Linda Lynch, parent
56A Warren Avenue
Hyde Park, MA 02136

Marily C. Murphy, Teacher
Franklin D. Roosevelt School

Jeanne Sullivan, Staff Developer
District IV

Doris Ford, parent
144 Garfield Avenue
Hyde Park, MA 02136

## District V

Elaine Spellman, Teacher
Quincy Dickerman School

Joseph Casey, Assistant Headmaster
Dorchester High School

Alice France, parent
26 Speedwell Street
Dorchester, MA 02122

Mary Vozzella, Teacher
Sarah Greenwood School

William Wright, Principal
Rochambeau School

Mary McCarthy, parent
25 Maydala Street
Dorchester, MA 02124

## District VI

Maryellen Donahue, Teacher
O.H. Perry School

Ruth Barr, Teacher
O.H. Perry School

## District VII

Virginia DiFranza, Reading Coordinator
District VII

Mary Gonski, Teacher/Reading Specialist
Warren Prescott School

Dorothy Rankin, parent
19 Grenville Street
Roxbury, MA 02119

## District VIII

Elaine Randolph, Teacher
Patrick J. Kennedy School

Patricia Connolly, Teacher
M.E. Bradley School

Patty Garnette, parent
132 Trenton Street
East Boston, MA 02128

Gerald Dechayne, Teacher
Joseph H. Barnes School

Phillip Matthews, Principal
James Otis School

Kay Savini, CDAC coordinator
District VIII

## District IX

Bernice Randell, parent
25 Nelson Street
Dorchester, MA 02124

Mary Canty, Teacher
Mario Umana School

Gustave Anglin, Principal
Mario Umana School

Sarah Fox, parent
6 Howland Street
Dorchester, MA 02121

Theresa Hamrock, Headmaster
Copley Square High School

Maureen Tisei, Assistant Headmaster,
Language Arts
Copley Square High School

Robert Passaretti, Teacher
English High School

Joseph Staples, Assistant Headmaster
Boston Trade Comprehensive High School

Angela Philactos, Teacher
James Hennigan School

Joan Ward, parent
101 Wellington Hill
Mattapan, MA 02126

Miriam Price, Teacher
Boston Latin School

Frederick J. Molloy, Teacher
Boston Latin School

Michael Contompasis, Headmaster
Boston Latin School

Pasquale Lochiatto, Principal
Nathan Hale School

Josephine Ryner, Teacher
Madison Park High School

Henry Dionisio, Teacher
Boston High School

Doreen Kelly, Teacher
William M. Trotter School

Susan Andrien, Teacher
Charles E. Mackey School

## Special Resources

Lynda Garden, Bilingual Liaison Resource Room Teacher

Joseph Lombardelli, Bilingual Reading and Language Arts Resource Specialist

Attachment B

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

July 9 - 17, 1979

Sponsored by

Office of Curriculum and Competency
Boston Public Schools

and

Coordinators Group
College/University/Cultural Pairings

in cooperation with
Urban Schools Collaborative, Northeastern University

Director, Dr. Sandra Stotsky, Curry College
Assistant Director, Hallie Touger, Curry College

Discussion Leaders

Dr. Lois Bouchard
Project Director/Staff Developer
Institute of Open Education in affiliation with Antioch University/Martin Luther King Middle School

Dr. Mary Gainor
Professor of English, Boston State College

Dr. Ronald Gwiazda
Assistant Headmaster, English, Madison Park High School

Mark McQuillan
Coordinator of English, Plymouth-Carver Regional School District

Ms. Cassandra Merrilles
Teacher of academically talented students, Martin Luther King Middle School

Supporting Staff

Ms. Janet McNair, Assistant to the Director, Urban Schools Collaborative
Dr. Gloria Bowens, Assistant Director, Urban Schools Collaborative

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

Northeastern University, July 9-13, 1979

Guest Speakers

Seymour Yesner, Director of English and Language Arts, K-12, Brookline Public Schools
Consultant, English, Reading and Humanities, Minneapolis Public Schools
Project Director, staff development project: "Improving Writing Through Intervention," Minneapolis Public Schools

Sandra Schor, Associate Chairman and Director of Composition, Department of English, Queens College, City University of New York
Co-Director, Queens English Project (a FIPSE grant)

Anne Obenchain, Director of Freshman Composition, Langley High School, Fairfax County, V

Kathleen Montero, Resource Specialist, Title VII, Reading and Language Program, Boston Public Schools

Sandra Gorton, Teacher of English as a Second Language and Head Teacher of Bilingual Cluster, Grover Cleveland School, Boston Public Schools

Laura Rossi, Resource and Training Specialist, Boston Public Schools

Workshop Leaders

Dr. Lois Bouchard, Staff Developer/Project Director, Institute of Open Education in affiliation with Antioch University/Martin Luther King Middle School

Vicki Jacobs, Composition Teacher, Holbrook High School (on leave)

Anne Obenchain, Director of Freshman Composition, Langley High School, Fairfax County, V

Charles Thomas, Teacher, Belmont Hill School

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON THE TEACHING AND ASSESSING OF WRITING SKILLS

Program Overview

Parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools have long been concerned about the need to improve their students' writing skills. Indeed, general concern about the teaching of composition and the level of literacy achieved by many public high school graduates has led to recent state regulations that require regular assessment of writing skills, the establishment of minimum standards, and provision for remediation in each community in the commonwealth. Unfortunately, the systematic teaching and assessment of writing K-12 has never been fully implemented in most school systems; little has been known until recent years about the teaching and learning of written language skills and few teachers have ever been trained to teach composition in the same way that they have been taught to teach reading, arithmetic, history, or biology.

The Summer Institute on the Teaching and Assessing of Writing Skills has been organized primarily to help parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools begin the development of a comprehensive, sequential, interdisciplinary, and inter-school writing program for Grades K-12 in each district. It is also designed to provide the framework for developing procedures for the state-mandated assessment of writing skills. The Institute represents a new mode of collaboration between the Chapter 636 Coordinators and the Boston Public Schools. It has been planned by the Chairperson of the Curriculum Committee, Coordinators Group, College/University/Cultural Pairings, together with other members of her committee, in cooperation with the Office of Curriculum and Competency of the Boston School Department.

The Institute is intended to serve as an initial forum coordinating and enriching the efforts of those interested in more effective teaching of writing and those responsible for the quality of the writing curriculum in the schools. The participants represent all educational levels and all districts: teachers and principals or assistant principals from each of the three levels from the nine districts; parent representatives from the nine Community District Advisory Councils; district level staff developers; and other interested administrators, coordinators, and central staff representatives. By involving administrative, staff, and parent representatives from all educational levels and districts, the Institute should benefit from a variety of perspectives and reciprocally benefit all levels and districts in the school system.

Through lectures, small group discussions, and workshops, participants will gain an understanding of the components of a total developmental writing program, current thinking about the teaching of composition, different techniques for skill development, methods of assessment and correction, and classroom and school-wide organizational features. Every characteristic of an effective basic skills program in writing suggested by the NCTE Committee on Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs in the April 1979 issue of SLATE (see the following page) will be touched upon during the Institute.

To conclude the Institute, participants will discuss problems and possibilities based upon school realities and ideas from the Institute after listening to a panel of Coordinators or Project Directors from the College/University/Cultural Pairings. Participants will then design a tentative scope and sequence for each district to follow, work out plans for what can be begun or implemented in their schools during the coming school year, and plan ways to evaluate follow-through commitments.

At the request of the U.S. Office of Education, NCTE has prepared a statement setting forth standards for basic skills writing programs. NEATE is happy to share this important statement with its membership.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF WRITING

Writing is the process of selecting, combining, arranging and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and, often, longer units of discourse. The process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development (narrating, explaining, describing, reporting, persuading); tone (from very personal to quite formal); form (from a limerick to a formal letter to a long research report); purpose (from discovering and expressing personal feelings and values to conducting the impersonal "business" of everyday life); possible audiences (oneself, classmates, a teacher, "the world"). Learning to write and to write increasingly well involves developing increasing skill and sensitivity in selecting from and combining these variables to shape particular messages. It also involves learning to conform to conventions of the printed language appropriate to the age of the writer and to the form, purpose and tone of the message.

Beyond the pragmatic purpose of shaping messages to others, writing can be a means of self-discovery, of finding out what we believe, know, and cannot find words or circumstances to say to others. Writing can be a deeply personal act of shaping our perception of the world and our relationships to people and things in that world. Thus, writing serves both public and personal needs of students, and it warrants the full, generous and continuing effort of all teachers.

## STANDARDS FOR BASIC SKILLS WRITING PROGRAMS

An effective basic skills program in writing has the following characteristics:

Teaching and Learning

1. There is evidence that knowledge of current theory and research in writing has been sought and applied in developing the writing program.
2. Writing instruction is a substantial and clearly identified part of an integrated English language arts curriculum.
3. Writing is called for in other subject matters across the curriculum.
4. The subject matter of writing has its richest source in the students' personal, social, and academic interests and experiences.
5. Students write in many forms (e.g., essays, notes, summaries, poems, letters, stories, reports, scripts, journals).
6. Students write for a variety of audiences (e.g., self, classmates, the community, the teacher) to learn that approaches vary as audiences vary.
7. Students write for a wide range of purpose (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to express the self, to explore, to clarify thinking).
8. Class time is devoted to all aspects of the writing process: generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing.
9. All students receive instruction in both (a) developing and expressing ideas and (b) using the conventions of edited American English.
10. Control of the conventions of edited American English (supporting skills such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and grammatical usage) is developed primarily during the writing process and secondarily through related exercises.
11. Students receive constructive responses — from teacher and from others –at various stages in the writing process.
12. Evaluation of individual writing growth:
    a. is based on complete pieces of writing;
    b. reflects informed judgments, first, about clarity and content and then about conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage;
    c. includes regular responses to individual pieces of student writing as well as periodic assessment measuring growth over a period of time.

Support

13. Teachers with major responsibility for writing instruction receive continuing education reflecting current knowledge about the teaching of writing.
14. Teachers of other subjects receive information and training in ways to make use of and respond to writing in their classes.
15. Parent and community groups are informed about the writing program and about ways in which they can support it.
16. School and class schedules provide sufficient time to assure that the writing process is thoroughly pursued.
17. Teachers and students have access to and make regular use of a wide range of resources (e.g., library services, media, teaching materials, duplicating facilities, supplies) for support of the writing program.

Program Evaluation

18. Evaluation of the writing program focuses on pre- and post- program sampling of complete pieces of writing, utilizing a recognized procedure (e.g., holistic rating, the Diederich scale, primary trait scoring) to arrive at reliable judgments about the quality of the program.
19. Evaluation of the program might also include assessment of a sample of student attitudes; gathering of pertinent quantative data (e.g., frequency of student writing, time devoted to writing activities); and observational data (evidence of prewriting activities, class anthologies, writing folders, and student writing displays).

INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

Northeastern University, Monday, July 9, 1979

8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee: Room 355 A and B

9:00 a.m. Welcome and opening remarks:
Dr. Gregory Coffin, Director of Urban Schools Collaborative and Chairperson of the Coordinators Group, College/University/ Cultural Pairings

Introductory Lecture: Dr. Sandra Stotsky, Curry College

Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills

- establishing a philosophy about the teaching of writing and our goals
- what we know from research
- components of a total developmental writing program

11:00 a.m. Small group discussions: Rooms 347, 348, 349, 351, 353

12:00 p.m. LUNCH: Room 356

1:00 p.m. Guest Lecture: Balancing the Basics
Seymour Yesner, Director of English and Language Arts, K-12, Brookline Public Schools

2:30 p.m. Small Group Workshops: Understanding beginning stages in the writing process and the essence of teaching composition
Rooms 347, 348, 349, 351, 353

4:00 p.m. Sign-out

See next page for assignment to discussion groups.

## DISCUSSION GROUPS

| Group I<br>Room 347 | Group II<br>Room 348 | Group III<br>Room 349 | Group IV<br>Room 351 | Group V<br>Room 353 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Van Story | Golden | M.Connolly | Murphy | McArdle |
| Spellman | Vozzella | Donahue | P.Connolly | Randolph |
| Chatis | Kelly | Decker | Pickett | MacDonald |
| Killilea | Hacunda | Andrien | Price | F.Malloy |
| Canty | Caristo | Dechayne | Passaretti | Garnette |
| Ryner | Serra | Dionisio | Pendergast | Manning |
| Casey | Goldrick | Anglin | Staples | Sullivan |
| DiFranza | Gillis | McCarthy | Bethel | Pola |
| Hernandez | Millett | C.M.Molloy | Lynch | Tossini |
| Biles | Ford | McCarthy | Vaughan | Randall |
| Ward | Fox | Garden | Cummings | Lombardelli |

For Monday morning and afternoon, July 9, 1979

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

Tuesday, July 10, 1979

8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee: Room 355 A and B

9:00 a.m. Guest Lecturer: Anne Obenchain
Topic: Sequencing and Contextualizing the Development of Written Language Skills, Grades 1-12

10:15 a.m. Writing Workshops in Rooms 347, 348, 349, and 351
(See attached page for assignment to Workshop Groups and Workshop Leader for Tuesday morning.)

11:30 a.m. Discussion and preparation of short written summary

12:00 LUNCH: Room 356

1:00 p.m. Guest Lecturer: Sandra Schor
Topic: Basic Writers and their Teachers: Issues and Attitudes

2:30 p.m. Writing Workshops in Rooms 347, 348, 349, and 351
(See attached page for assignment to Workshop Group and Workshop Leader for Tuesday afternoon.)

3:30 p.m. Discussion and preparation of short written summary

4:00 p.m. Sign-out

Wednesday, July 11, 1979

8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee: Room 355 A and B

9:00 a.m. Lecture: Sandra Stotsky
Topic: Integrating Reading and Writing across the Curriculum

10:00 a.m. Writing Workshops in Rooms 347, 348, 349, and 351
(See attached page for assignment to Workshop Group and Workshop Leader for Wednesday morning.)

11:00 a.m. Discussion and preparation of short written summary

11:30 LUNCH: Room 356

1:00 p.m. Guest Lecturers: Sandra Gorton, Kathleen Montero, and Laura Rossi
Topic: Helping Bilingual Students: Issues, Methods, and Materials

2:00 p.m. Writing Workshops in Rooms 347, 348, 349, and 351
(See attached page for assignment to Workshop Group and Workshop Leader for Wednesday afternoon.)

3:30 p.m. Discussion and preparation of short written summary

4:00 p.m. Sign-out

## WORKSHOP GROUPS

| Group I<br>Room 347 | Group II<br>Room 348 | Group III<br>Room 349 |
|---|---|---|
| Van Story | M. Connolly | McArdle |
| Spellman | Donahue | Randolph |
| Chatis | Decker | MacDonald |
| Killilea | Andrien | F. Malloy |
| Canty | Dechayne | Serra |
| Ryner | Dionisio | Manning |
| Casey | Anglin | Sullivan |
| DiFranza | McCarthy | Pola |
| Hernadez | C.M. Molloy | Tomasini |
| Biles | McCarthy | Randall |
| Ward | Garden | Lombardelli |
| Golden | Gillis | Price |
| Vozella | Millett | Passaretti |
| Hacunda | Ford | Pendergast |
| Caristo | Fox | Staples |
| Goldrick | Murphy | Bethel |
| Kelly | P. Connolly | Lynnh |
| Garnette | Pickett | Vaughan |
| Cummings | | |

### Workshop Sessions

Lois Bouchard: Writing in Different Modes and Genres

Vicki Jacobs: Sentence-Combining Techniques

Charles Thomas: Developing and Organizing Ideas for Writing First Drafts

Anne Obenchain: Materials and Methods to Sequence Written Language Skill Development

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| | Room 347<br>Bouchard | Room 351<br>Jacobs | Room 349<br>Thomas | Room 353<br>Obenchain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tuesday Morning | Group I<br>McQuillan | Group II<br>Merrilles | Group III<br>Gainor | ——— |
| Tuesday Afternoon | Group II<br>Merrilles | Group I<br>Gwiazda | ——— | Group III<br>Gainor |
| Wednesday Morning | Group III<br>Gainor | ——— | Group I<br>McQuillan | Group II<br>Gwiazda |
| Wednesday Afternoon | ——— | Group III<br>Gwiazda | Group II<br>Merrilles | Group I<br>McQuillan |

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

Thursday, July 12, 1979

Through lectures, two training sessions, and group discussions, officials from Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey will present and discuss various uses of holistic rating of writing:

1. to develop common standards in a school
2. to develop a positive approach to correction
3. to help teachers distinguish between assessment and grading
4. to assess curriculum and student growth
5. to develop critical thinking about all aspects of a piece of writing
6. to develop over time a series of samples of writing representing the range of writing ability from grade level to grade level

8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee: Room 355 A and B
9:00 - 12:00 Morning session
12:00 LUNCH: Room 356
1:00 - 4:00 Afternoon session
4:00 Sign-out

Optional
4:00-5:00 Free Publishers' Exhibit in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Listening, and Speaking
(Software and Hardware)

in W.S. Kennedy Building, Boston State College,
corner of Longwood and Huntington Avenues

free parking in rear - Latin High School lot

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

Friday, July 13, 1979

8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee: Room 355 A and B

9:00 a.m. Panel Presentation and Discussion: Coordinators or Project Directors in College/University/Cultural Pairings with a writing component will discuss strengths and weaknesses of their programs

10:00 a.m.
1. Development of preliminary recommendations for the content of a curriculum guide for each educational level through consensus of participants
2. Compilation of ideas and recommendations based on week's activities
3. Development of guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing

(Assignment to Group and Room according to Monday's schedule. Recorder to be selected to take notes.)

12:00 p.m. LUNCH: Room 356
Introduction of Dr. Rose Feinberg, President-Elect, New England Association of Teachers of English

1:00 p.m. Refinement of morning's recommendations according to educational level

Assignment to 1 of 3 groups according to education level:

| Grades 1 - 5 | Grades 6 - 8 | Grades 9 - 12 |
|---|---|---|
| Room 355 | Room 347 | Room 348 |

(Parents may choose whatever group they wish to participate in.)

2:00 p.m. Plans for what can be feasible to begin or implement for coming year. Discussion of implementation of recommendations and follow-through plans; role of administrators, teachers, and parents

3:00 p.m. Selection of 3 representatives from each district (27 in all) as a guiding task force to meet at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 17, Parent's Lounge, Curry College. Stipend of $50 for the day

(All participants meet in Room 355 A and B according to district.)

3:30 p.m. Closing Remarks: Eric Cooper, Office of Curriculum and Competency. Summing up; evaluation of Institute: Room 355 A and B

4:00 p.m. Evaluation handed in and sign-out

Curry College, Tuesday, July 17, 1979

Three representatives from each district will convene to refine first draft of recommendations and to plan for follow-through and for possible funding.

1. Possible use of staff developers (and reading coordinators) in each district for monitoring progress during fall and providing feedback.

2. Possible meeting of participants in December for evaluation of follow-through.

3. Possible plans to identify good teachers of writing for future teacher-training summer institutes.

Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills

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English Record

Journal of Basic Writing

Language Arts

Leaflet (NEATE)

Research in the Teaching of English

Attachment C

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A K-12 WRITING PROGRAM IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FROM

THE SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS

July 9 - 17, 1979

Sponsored by

Office of Curriculum and Competency
Boston Public Schools

and

Coordinators Group
College/University/Cultural Pairings

in cooperation with

Urban Schools Collaborative, Northeastern University

Submitted to

Office of Curriculum and Competency
Boston Public Schools

by

Dr. Sandra Stotsky, Curry College
Director, Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills
Chairperson, Curriculum Committee, Coordinators Group
College/University/Cultural Pairings

September 1979

## INTRODUCTION

Parents, teachers, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools have long been concerned about the need to improve their students' writing skills. Indeed, general concern about the teaching of composition and the level of literacy achieved by many public high school graduates has led to recent state regulations that require regular assessment of writing skills, the establishment of minimum standards, and provision for remediation in each community in the commonwealth. Unfortunately, a systematic and comprehensive K-12 writing program has never been fully implemented in most school systems; little has been known until recent years about the teaching, learning, and assessment of written language skills and few teachers have ever been trained to teach composition in the same way that they have been taught to teach reading, arithmetic, history, or biology.

The Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills was organized primarily to help parents, teachers and administrators in the Boston Public Schools begin the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, and interdisciplinary writing program for Grades K-12 in each district. It was also designed to develop guidelines for the state-mandated assessment of writing skills as part of its Basic Skills Improvement Policy. The Institute was planned and directed by the Chairperson of the Curriculum Committee, Coordinators Group, College/University/Cultural Pairings in cooperation with the Office of Curriculum and Competency in the Boston School Department. It was facilitated and sponsored by the Coordinators Group in conjunction with the office of Urban Schools Collaborative at Northeastern University and thus represented a new mode of collaboration between the Coordinators Groups and the Boston Public Schools.

The Institute was intended to serve as an initial forum coordinating and enriching the efforts of those interested in more effective teaching or writing and those responsible for the quality of the writing curriculum in the schools. The participants were to represent all educational levels and all districts: teachers and principals or assistant principals from each of the three levels from the nine districts; parent representatives from the nine Community District Advisory Councils and the Boston Home and School Association; district level staff development personnel; and other interested administrators, coordinators, and central administration representatives. By involving teachers, parents, and administrative representatives from all educational levels and districts, the Institute was expected to benefit from a variety of perspectives and reciprocally benefit all levels and districts in the school system.

The Institute was held at Northeastern University from July 9 - 13, 1979, and Curry College on July 17, 1979. Through lectures, small group discussions, and workshops, participants were provided with an opportunity to gain an understanding of the components of a total developmental writing program, current thinking about the teaching of composition for different student populations, various techniques for skill development, methods of assessment and correction, and classroom and schoolwide organizational features. Every characteristic of an effective basic skills program in writing suggested by the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs was touched upon during the Institute.

To conclude the Institute, participants were asked to formulate recommendations to guide the development of a K-12 writing program and curriculum guide in the Boston Public Schools in the coming years. The following pages contain their recommendations to the Office of Curriculum and Competency. It was the hope of all the participants at the Institute that these recommendations would be the beginning of a continuing and fruitful dialogue among parents, teachers, and administrators at all levels in the school system.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A K-12 WRITING PROGRAM IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FROM

THE SUMMER INSTITUTE ON TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING SKILLS*

July 9-17, 1979

## Statement of Philosophy

The writing program should be developmental from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Priorities in the current English/language arts program should be re-evaluated and more emphasis placed on the writing component of the program.

Since a rich oral-language base is necessary to develop effective writing skills at all levels, the development of oral-language skills must be a component of the writing program at all levels.

Writing experiences and instruction should begin in Kindergarten. Emphasis should be on the development of oral language and handwriting skills.

Reading and writing activities should be integrated in an interdisciplinary approach at all grade levels.

All teachers in all subject areas should be responsible for maintaining and developing writing skills.

All writing activities should develop the student's confidence in writing.

The ultimate goal of the writing program should be to produce competent writers.

## Contents of the Curriculum Guide

The scope and sequence in writing instruction should be correlated with achievement levels rather than grade levels. In writing, students should move from one achievement level to another rather than from one grade level to another.

The curriculum guide should indicate whether a skill or mode of writing is being introduced for continuing development or whether mastery is expected at that level.

Reteaching, review, or reinforcement for all skills and modes of writing should be indicated in the guide.

The scope and sequence should be correlated with the Individual Criterion Referenced Test and the results of the Middle School Task Force Needs Assessment.

All forms or genres of writing should be included in the curriculum guide.

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*The following parents, teachers, and administrators assisted in the final editing of the recommendations: Francis Manning, Jeanne Sullivan, Claire McArdle, Elsie Biles, Joseph Casey, Mary McCarthy, Patty Garnette, and Margaret Pickett.

Various forms of writing should be examined to determine the appropriate level for introducing a specific form. See Appendix A for one possible list of forms.

The guide should indicate entry levels for various forms of writing, noting which ones are required and which ones are for enrichment. See Appendix B for suggested entry levels for a number of forms.

Students should experience writing in many forms on different topics for a variety of audiences.

Students should have frequent experiences with all stages of the writing process; these stages include prewriting, composing, revising, and editing.

Students should have frequent opportunities to publish their own writing in school or classroom anthologies or newspapers.

Practice in any stage of the writing processs may be considered an instructional goal in itself or part of the process in completing a piece of writing; each writing experience need not entail formal evaluation.

Instruction should focus as much on students' experiences with the various stages of the writing process as on completion of a piece of writing.

The teacher's role in writing instruction must be defined both as respondent during the stages of the writing process and as final evaluator of the completed piece of writing.

Instruction in writing requires some response from the teacher on selected pieces of writing at least once a week.

The teacher's response should, in general, include praise and contain a constructive comment.

A useful guide should contain suggestions for teachers about ways to give praise.

Each piece of student writing does not require a written response from the teacher.

Teachers should increase the amount of writing done in their classrooms without necessarily increasing the amount of correction they do.

A specific quantity of writing per week might be established for each grade level.

At the elementary school level, WEDGE (Writing Every Day Generates Excellence) is a worthwhile idea for developing fluency.

To manage increased amounts of writing, new and varied methods of response and evaluation should be used, such as peer correction, holistic scoring, conferencing, analytic scoring, primary trait scoring, writing for one's self, and sharing writing with peers and family.

Editing and proofreading are skills that must be developed at all grade levels.

Students should be taught to use editing and proofreading skills primarily during the final stage of the writing process.

Instruction in editing and proofreading should include the use of a uniform correction symbol system.

The use of a uniform correction symbol system should be initiated on a city-wide basis.

Correction of writing errors should be related to the scope and sequence correlated with the student's achievement level in writing.

Grammar study should be de-emphasized in the curriculum; teachers should develop ways that help students to transfer grammatical knowledge into their writing and to use this knowledge in editing final drafts.

While the teaching of formal grammar can be an end in itself, it should not be confused with instruction in writing.

Students should be taught to write edited American English in forms appropriate to a variety of occasions.

A consistent form of handwriting should be taught throughout all schools. Handwriting instruction should continue through high school.

The use of worksheets permitting incomplete-sentence answers should be drastically limited. Instead, complete-sentence answers and legible handwriting should be emphasized in all subjects.

The curriculum guide for the writing program should describe examples of ways in which writing and reading activities can be integrated in all subject areas at all levels.

The guide should include a description of the state-mandated minimum standards in writing. See Appendix C.

The guide should include a useful bibliography.

The guide should contain a supplement for parents and other adults indicating ways in which they can support the writing program.

The supplement should indicate how parents can provide their children with activities/experiences that will help them to develop writing skills. It should suggest:

how parents can participate in a home writing program similar to the home reading program.

how parents can write with their children.

a list of good books for parents to read to their children.

how parents can take advantage of bookmobile visits.

## Development of the Curriculum Guide

One K-12 curriculum guide for English/language arts should be available to all teachers and administrators and should be written in a way that is clear and useful to substitute teachers, parents, and school volunteers.

At every school, in-service time should be provided for the total staff to participate in the design of the curriculum guide.

A preliminary curriculum guide for the writing program should be distributed to teachers for review before final editing and implementation.

Parents and school volunteers should participate in developing the supplement to the guide and in reviewing the entire curriculum guide before final editing.

## Evaluation

A composition folder documenting the student's growth in writing should accompany each student from grade to grade. A study of other systems' use of these folders, such as in Attleboro or in Brookline, would be helpful. A few schools should pilot their use and report the results before system-wide implementation.

The composition folders might contain a checklist of skills from the curriculum guide, annotated yearly by each teacher.

Students should help select the samples of their writing to be placed in the permanent composition folder.

Both the teacher and the student should be involved in the process of evaluation. Emphasis should be positive.

Guidelines for evaluation should be uncomplicated and clearly understood by all concerned with the process.

The final evaluation of a student's writing must be the responsibility of the English/language arts teacher.

Methods and measures to evaluate levels of writing skill need to be developed.

When there is insufficient correlation between grade level and writing level, the teacher should use the scope and sequence in the instructional program for directing remediation. The use of "diagnostic teaching" is recommended. Provision must be made for individual differences between grade level and the scope and sequence for the writing level.

The middle school level is recommended for beginning formal remediation in writing.

Placement in foreign language classes at the middle school level should be evaluated; some students might receive more benefit by placement in remedial writing classes.

Teachers should be cognizant of the needs of bilingual students.

The concept of grade level expectations in writing for special needs and bilingual students should be evaluated.

The writing program must not supplement other programs but should be integrated with them.

State-Mandated Basic Skills Improvement Program and Establishment of Minimum Standards in Writing

The position of a Director of Writing, K-12, should be considered. The person responsible for establishing objectives to meet state-mandated minimum standards and for evaluating student achievement of these objectives needs to be identified as soon as possible.

Assessment of basic skills in writing should include both objective measures and a writing sample.

Any assessment from Grade 7 to Grade 12 should include the writing of a sample essay for which the student is given the opportunity to progress through the stages of the writing process.

One assessment of writing skill should occur at Grade 10.

It is important to determine the type of tests to be given at each level before determining the method of scoring. See Appendix D for an outline of holistic rating prepared by Educational Testing Service.

Samples of low, middle, and high achievement in writing for each achievement level on different topics and in various forms should be developed for the assessment and made available to all teachers, administrators, and parents. These samples might be updated periodically.

The methodology of assessing writing should be explored further on a formal basis.

Staff Development

In-service time must be provided for teachers in order to implement the writing program.

In-service programs in writing in each school should be designed on an inter-disciplinary basis to respond to the needs of the total staff.

Teachers, parents, school volunteers, and administrators should participate together in workshops on writing; these workshops should be coordinated by the district level staff development personnel, with city-wide consolidation where appropriate. Suggested topics for workshops include:

how to generate topics for free writing.
how to motivate students to write
writing in diverse forms for diverse audiences.
the teacher as model.

Teachers need time, opportunities, and training/retraining to further develop their own writing skills.

Teachers need time, opportunities, and a structure to share ideas within their schools and districts and across districts.

A Writing Newsletter for sharing ideas about the teaching and assessment of writing might be distributed regularly to all teachers.

Development of School and Community Resources

A city-wide resource center for writing needs to be established; present resource centers at the Bancroft and Ripley Schools might be used to coordinate the effort.

Resource centers for writing should be established within each school; existing priorities for other programs may need to be re-evaluated to achieve this goal.

Parents and other adults should be recruited as volunteers or aides to work with the writing program in the classroom under the teacher's guidance; a concise and clear role definition is necessary.

Volunteers and aides should be trained to help teachers with such activities as oral language enrichment, conferencing, correcting writing, maintaining composition folders, or maintaining the resource centers for writing in each school.

Parents and school volunteers should participate in in-service workshops on writing; in addition, separate workshops might be considered.

Information about the writing program should be distributed regularly in newsletters for parents, teachers, administrators, and school volunteers.

Administration

Strong support for the writing program should be voiced by the Superintendent of Schools and by those in charge of curriculum.

Recommendations from the Summer Institute need to be communicated to, reviewed by, and acted upon by the Superintendent of Schools, the Community Superintendents, the Office of Curriculum and Competency, the Citywide Parents' Advisory Council, the Community District Advisory Councils, the Boston Home and School Association, and other relevant teacher, parent, and administrative organizations.

Areas of responsibility should be established for the writing program within central administration and the community district offices as well as within each district school.

District coordinators and staff development personnel should be responsible for reading and writing at the district level, with coordination provided by central administration.

District staff development personnel should be responsible for implementing programs in writing, monitoring pilot projects, and sharing ideas.

Workshops on writing should be coordinated by central administration and district staff development personnel for teachers, parents, school volunteers, and administrators on a citywide and district-wide basis.

Responsibility for identifying good teachers of writing within the school system should be pinpointed. A tentative list should be developed in the fall. These teachers should be used as resources for inservice programs and for developing the curriculum guide.

Existing English/language arts curriculum guides should be located and reviewed, with the possibility of revision.

Much communication should exist among districts, among schools, and between schools and districts and central administration. Visible evidence of leadership on curriculum issues in writing is needed from central administration.

The curriculum councils being formed by Dr. Bernice Miller should be a structure for sharing information and ideas on a system-wide basis.

Follow-Through Plans

All teachers, parents, and administrators should be informed of what was accomplished at the Institute. See Appendix E for the outline of the follow-through plan recommended by elected participants at the sixth day of the Institute on July 17, 1979, at Curry College.

A final draft of the recommendations should be sent to the Boston Association of School Administrators and Superintendents and the Boston Teachers Union. Both unions will be asked to send a representative to the October and December meeting of all participants at the Summer Institute.

# SOME FORMS OF WRITING

Compiled from Suggestions at the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills
July 9-17, 1979

by
Lois Bouchard

addresses
advertisements
agendas
alphabet books
anecdotes
announcements
applications
arguments
articles
autobiographies

ballads
bills
biographies
books
briefs

cartoons
cases
checks
children's books
charts
chronicles
citations
comics
commercials
corrections
criticism

debates
descriptions
dialogues
diaries
dictionaries
directions
dissertations
doodles
dreams

editorials
epics
epitaphs
epithets
essays
evaluations

fables
fairy tales
folk tales

graffiti

haiku

ideas
instructions
insults
interviews
inventories
invitations

jingles
jokes
journals

labels
laws
legends
lesson plans
letters
- business
- complaint
- fan
- excuse
- to editors
- love
- reference
- social

limericks
lists
lyrical poems

manifestos
memos
memoirs
messages
monologues
myths

newspapers
notes
novels

obituaries
odes
order forms
outlines

parables
passes
permission slips
plays
posters
prayers
précis
prescriptions
profiles
proposals
proverbs
puzzles

queries
questions
quotations

receipts
recipes
reports
resumes
reviews
riddles

schedules
scribbles
self-evaluations
sermons
short stories
signs
slogans
songs
sonnets
suicide notes
summaries
syllabuses

tall tales
tax forms
theses

wills

yarns

## LEVEL OF INTRODUCTION FOR SOME FORMS OF WRITING

**Compiled by Participants at the Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills**
July 9-17, 1979

| Types of Writing | | Grades | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| A. | Correct copying | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B. | Dictations | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C. | Sentence-Expansions | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| D. | Sentence-Combining | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| E. | Stories | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F. | Descriptions | x | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| G. | Directions | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| H. | Reports | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| I. | Diaries | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| J. | Journals | | x | x | | | | | | | | | |
| K. | Poetic Writing | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| L. | Social Letters | | x | x | | | | | | | | | |
| M. | Business Letters | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| N. | Summaries | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| O. | Outlines | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| P. | Term Paper | | | | | | | | | | x | | |
| Q. | Research Paper | | | | x | x | | | | | | | |
| R. | Note-Taking | | | | x | x | | | | | | | |

**Massachusetts Department of Education**

Secondary Level Minimum Standards for Writing

(2) *Writing.* Given the opportunity to use a dictionary, students, through their own writing samples, will demonstrate:

(a) Knowledge of the subject
   1. The writer has something to say
   2. Ideas are supported with relevant details

(b) Clear and consistent purpose

(c) Organization
   1. Ideas are related
   2. Ideas progress logically from one point to another

(d) An awareness of the intended reader

(e) Precise word choices
   1. Words appeal to the reader's senses
   2. Words suit the purpose
   3. Words are appropriate for the intended reader

(f) Fulfillment of the purpose.
   1. Adequate information is provided
   2. The writing is free of irrelevancy
   3. The conclusion reemphasizes the purpose

(g) Correct capitalization and punctuation

(h) Correct spelling

(i) Legible handwriting

(j) Complete sentences

(k) Standard use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs

(l) Agreement of subject and verb

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

# HOLISTIC SCORING

I. What is holistic scoring?

A. The theory.

1. The whole of a piece of writing is greater than any of its parts.

2. English teachers, though they may have difficulty in giving a verbal description of writing ability that is recognizable to all, can recognize good writing when they see it.

3. Though in an analytic reading teachers may not agree on the weight to be given a particular trait, these same teachers will, in judging a work as a whole, rank papers in much the same way.

4. No aspect of writing skill can really be judged independently; the halo effect is always strong.

B. The method.

1. The standards.

a. Standards are not imposed upon readers; readers themselves determine standards.

b. Papers are not judged against an ideal, but against what is: what students have written on this topic at this time.

c. Standards must be maintained and reinforced throughout the reading.

2. The judgments.

a. Judgments are made on anonymous papers.

b. Judgments are independent.

c. Multiple judgments on each paper are mandatory.

d. Judgments must be quick and immediate.

e. Judgments must be definite, for the score scale has no middle points.

3. The scoring.

a. The score is the sum of all the readers' judgments.

b. Some discrepancies in the scores the readers give are to be expected.

c. Wide discrepancies between readers' scores must be corrected immediately.

d. Regular divergence from the standards on the part of any reader must be corrected.

II. Why use holistic scoring?

A. It is efficient.

B. It is reliable.

C. It emphasizes what is right rather than what is wrong with a piece of writing.

D. It requires consensus among readers.

E. It encourages evaluation of the program, as well as the individual pieces of writing.

III. How is a topic scored? (Actual reading)

A. The topic is read and analyzed.

B. The ground rules are established.

C. The standards are set through the use of sample papers.

D. The papers are read.

1. First reader's score must remain unknown to other readers.

2. All papers should be read once before any are read twice.

3. Readers must be allowed to rest regularly.

4. Papers must flow efficiently from reader to reader.

IV. What makes a good topic?

A. The interest to the students.

B. The interest to the readers.

C. The range of writing it produces.

D. The relative objectivity with which it can be scored.

V. Of what use is holistic scoring in the schools?

A. It can promote communication about the teaching of writing among faculty members.

B. It can be used to measure growth in students' writing ability.

C. It enables teachers to score writing assignments quickly and reliably.

D. It calls for multiple evaluations.

## Follow-Through Plan for Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills*

August 1979: Preparation of Final Recommendations about a K-12 Writing Program and Curriculum Guide, based upon initial recommendations from the July 13 session at the Institute, additions and revisions suggested by participants at the July 17 session at Curry College, and final review by volunteer advisory committee of 10 participants during August.

September 1979: Mailing of:

1. Final Recommendations and Outline of Follow-Through Plan, with notice arrangements, agenda for October meeting, and request for speakers, to all participants.

2. Final Recommendations and Outline of Follow-Through Plans to Office of Curriculum and Competency.

October 1979: Meeting of all participants at Summer Institute, July 9-17, for:

1. Presentation by Office of Curriculum and Competency and Senior Curriculum Advisors of initial response to Final Recommendations.

2. Report by participants at the Summer Institute of activities or plans being implemented in the schools as a result of Summer Institute.

(complete minutes to be taken)

November 1979: Mailing of complete minutes from October meeting, with notice of arrangements, agenda for December meeting, and request for speakers, to all participants.

December 1979: Meeting of all participants at Summer Institute, July 9-17, for:

1. Presentation of continued response to Final Recommendations by Office o Curriculum and Competency and Senior Curriculum Advisors: possible announcement of new plans for curriculum and staff development for K-12 writing program.

2. Report by speakers at October meeting and possible others about progres of plans and activities being implemented.

3. Final written evaluation of results of Institute by all participants.

4. Generation of ideas for proposal for a grant for curriculum and staff development.

(complete minutes to be taken)

January 1980: Preparation of final report of Institute and follow-through meetings and mailing to all participants at Summer Institute and to Office of Curriculum and Competency.

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*This follow-through plan was devised by the 27 elected participants at the sixth day of the Institute on July 17, 1979 at Curry College in cooperation with the three Senior Curriculum Advisors.

Attachment D-1

Summer Institute on Teaching and Assessing Writing Skills

Northeastern University, July 9-13, 1979

Evaluation Form

1. Please evaluate the guest speakers on a 1 to 4 scale (1 = least good, 4 = excellent). Several may hold the same rank. Please rank only those that you yourself heard.

   Seymour Yesner. . . . . ._____
   Comment _____

   Sandra Schor. . . . . ._____
   Comment _____

   Anne Obenchain. . . . . ._____
   Comment _____

   Sandra Gorton, Kathleen Montero, and
   Laura Rossi. . . . . _____
   Comment _____

2. Comment on the group discussions led by the Discussion Leaders: Mary Gainor, Lois Bouchard, Ronald Gwiazda, Mark McQuillan, and Cassandra Merrilles.

3. Comment on the Workshop Sessions.

   a. Vicki Jacobs:

b. Lois Bouchard:

c. Charles Thomas:

d. Anne Obenchain:

4. Comment on the lectures by Sandra Stotsky:

5. Comment on the value of the presentation by Educational Testing Service.

6. Comment on the value of the group development of the tentative scope and sequence for the entire school system.

7. Comment on the organization of this institute.

8. Comment on the value of the reading and writing assignments.

9. Do you feel the Institute accomplished its objectives as stated in the description? Comment fully.

10. Constructive criticism, positive and negative, invited below.

## Proposed Writing Institute

Many administrators, teachers, and parents in the Boston Public Schools have expressed an interest in and a need for an Institute on the Teaching and Assessing of Writing Skills to be held during the academic year. Based upon your experiences at this Institute, may we have your views on the matter? These questions were designed for the purpose of making a proposal to appropriate foundations.

### Content

1. What topic or topics would prove beneficial?_____

   _____

   _____

2. What format would be most helpful?

   a) lectures followed by large group discussions with lecturer _____

   b) lectures followed by small group discussions with discussion leaders _____

   c) classroom observations followed by discussions _____

   d) workshops in/on a variety of topics covered at the same time _____

   e) other suggestions _____

   _____

3. How much in advance would you like to receive a required reading list?

   _____

### Time and Length

1. Would fall, winter, spring be preferable? _____

2. Is any month more or less convenient? _____

3. How should timing be arranged? _____

   a) 1,2,3,4,5,6, Saturdays (circle)

   b) 1 or 2 intensive weekends including (check one or more)
   Fri. evenings (3 hrs.)____, Sat. (6-8 hrs.)_____, Sunday (4 hrs.)_____

   Is (a) or (b) above preferable?

4. Alternative suggestions _____

   _____

### Credit

Would you attend for a stipend inservice credit graduate credit no credit? (circle

Attachment E-1

Elsie M. Biles
10 Sylvia Court
Hyde Park, Ma. 02136

August 28, 1979

Rev. Harold G. Ross
and CDAC IV
612 Metropolitan Ave.
Hyde Park, Ma. 02136

Dear CDAC Members;

I attended the Institute on Teaching and Assesing Writing Skills at Northeastern University July 9-13, 1979. I found the Institute interesting, informative and well organized. I was dis-appointed however, that I saw no one from Hyde Park High School's English Department in attendance. To my surprise, this writing group was making recommendations for a writing program that will be implemented in the Boston Public School System to comply with the state mandate to improve writing skills. I am honored to have had the opportunity to be included in these sessions.

The following are recommendations that I would like to share with CDAC IV, Hyde Park High School, and all other district schools:

STATEMENT: Writing involves reading and thought. Reading does not necessarily improve writing and does not require writing skills.

STATEMENT: WEDGE (writing every day) is a worthwhile idea; it guarantees improvement.

STATEMENT: It costs nothing to require more writing (no new equipment, etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The establishment of a school newspaper for and by students.
2. Students be required to write sentences instead of just filling the blanks.
3. Author-Editor Program: Students write papers and then edit each others writing.
4. Teach parents how to help their children at home. Have parents become involved with their child's education with the use of a special parent coordinator.

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5. A committment by each school for each student to write 500 words or more a week.
6. Students should be taught all types of writing. Example: Dictation, used on all levels to improve vocabulary, précis writing for note taking, outlining, etc.
7. Citywide symbols for correction be used.

This list represents a small portion of the recommendations developed at the Institute that can be implemented immediately.

I am interested in securing feedback from the HPHS English Department regarding these recommendations. If any of these recommendations are being used presently, or what is the possibility of implementing some of the ideas.

Example: The high School newspaper. I understand this was also a recommendation in Dr. Wood's Report, "HYDE PARK HIGH SCHOOL: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE". The newspaper would serve two functions, to help improve race relations and students would be writing more.

I will be available for questions and am willing to share all information I received from the institute.

Yours truly,

Elsie M. Biles

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cc: Mr. Michael Turner
Mr. Michael Donato
HPHS English Dept.

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